

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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WILLING TO DIE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROSE AND THE KEY."

CHAPTER XLIII. COLD STEEL.

I AM quite certain now that the impious sophistries to which some proud minds in affliction abandon themselves, are the direful suggestions of intelligences immensely superior in power to ourselves. When they call to us in the air we listen; when they knock at the door we go down and open to them; we take them in to sup with us, we make them our guests, they become sojourners in the house, and are about our paths, and about our beds, and spying out all our ways; their thoughts become our thoughts, their wickedness our wickedness, their purposes our purposes, till, without perceiving it, we are their slaves. And then when a fit opportunity presents itself, they make, in Doctor Johnson's phrase, "a snatch of us."

Something like this was near happening to me. You shall hear.

I grew, on a sudden, faint and cold; a horror of returning home stole over me. I could not go home, and yet I had no other choice but death. I had scarcely thought of death, when a longing seized me. Death grew so beautiful in my eyes! The false smile, the mysterious welcome, the sweep of deep waters, the vague allurements of a profound endless welcome, drew me on and on.

Two men chatting passed me by as one said to the other, "The tide's full in at Waterloo Bridge now; the moon must look quite lovely there." It was spoken in harmony with my thoughts.

I had read in my happier days in the papers how poor girls had ended their misery by climbing over the balustrade of

Waterloo Bridge, over the black abyss, dotted with the reflected lamps, and stepping off it into the dark air into death.

I was going now to that bridge; people would direct me; by the time I reached it the thoroughfare would be still and deserted enough.

I can't say I had determined upon this; I can't say I ever thought about it; it was only that the scene and the event had taken possession of me, with the longing of a child for its home.

The streets were quieter now; but some shops were still open. Among these was a jeweller's. The shutters were up, and only the door open. I stepped in, I don't in the least know why. The fever, I suppose, had touched my brain.

There were only three men in the shop; one behind the counter, a smiling, ceremonious man, whom I believe to have been the owner; the two others were customers. One was a young man, sitting on a chair with his elbow on the counter, examining and turning over some jewellery that glittered in a little heap on the counter. The other, older and dressed in black, was leaning over the counter, with his back to me, and discussing in low, careless tones, the merits of a dagger, which, from their talk, not distinctly heard, I conjectured the young man had been recommending as a specific against garotters. I was in no condition to comprehend or care for the debate. The elder man, as he talked, sometimes laid the little weapon down upon the counter, and sometimes took it up, fitting it in his hand.

The intense light of the gas striking on my eyes made them ache acutely.

I don't know why, or how, I entered the shop; I only know that I found myself standing within the door in a blaze of gas-light.

The jeweller, looking at me sharply across the counter, said :

"Well, ma'am?"

I answered :

"Can you give me change for a sovereign?"

I must have been losing my head; for though I spoke in perfect good faith I had not a shilling about me. It was not forgetfulness, but distinctly an illusion; for I not only had the picture of the imaginary sovereign distinctly before me, but thought I had it actually in my hand.

The jeweller was talking in subdued and urbane accents to his customer, and pointing out no doubt the special beauties and workmanship of his bijouterie.

"Sorry I can't oblige you; you must try elsewhere," he said, again directing a hard glance at me. I think he was satisfied that I was not a thief; and he continued his talk with the young man who was making his selection, and who was probably a little hard to please.

I turned to leave the shop, and the jeweller went into the next room, possibly in search of something more likely to please his fastidious client at the counter.

I had not yet seen the face of either of the visitors to the shop, but I was conscious that the younger of the two had once or twice looked over his shoulder at me. He now said, taking his purse from his pocket—it was but as a parenthesis in his talk with his companion :

"I beg pardon; perhaps I can manage that change for you."

I drew nearer.

What occurred next appeared to me like an incident in a dream, in which our motives are often so obscure that our own acts take us by surprise. Whether it was a mad moment or a lucid moment I don't know; for in extreme misery, if our courage does not fail us, our thoughts are always wicked.

I stood there, a slight figure, in crape, elocked, veiled—in pain, giddy, confused. I cannot tell you what interest the commonplace spectacle before me had for me, nor why I stayed there, gazing toward the three gas lamps that seemed each girt with a dazzling halo that made my eyes ache.

What sounds and sights smote my sick senses with a jarring recognition? The hard, nasal tones of the elderly man in black, who leaned over the counter, and the pallid, scornful face, with its fine, restless eyes and sinister energy, were those of Monsieur Droquille!

He was talking to his companion, and did not trouble himself to look at me. He little dreamed what an image of death stood at his elbow!

They were not talking any longer about the pretty dagger that lay on the counter by his open fingers. Monsieur Droquille was now indulging his cynical vein upon another theme. He was finishing a satirical summing up of poor papa's character.

I saw the sneer, the shrug; I heard in his hard, bitter talk the name made sacred to me by unutterable calamity; I listened to the outrage from the lips of the man who had himself done it all. Oh, beloved, ruined father! Can I ever forget the pale smile of despair, the cold, piteous voice with which, on that frightful night, he said, "Droquille has done it all; he has broken my heart." And here was the very Droquille, with the scoff, the contempt, the triumph in his pitiless face; and poor papa in his bloody shroud, and mamma dying! What cared I what became of me? An icy chill seemed to stream from my brain through me, to my feet, to my finger tips; as a shadow moves, I had leaned over, and the hand that holds this pen had struck the dagger into Droquille's breast.

In a moment his face darkened, with a horrified, vacant look. His mouth opened, as if to speak, or call out, but no sound came; his deep-set eyes, fixed on me, were darkening; he was sinking backward, with a groping motion of his hand as if to ward off another blow.

Was it real? For a second I stared, freezing with horror; and then, with a gasp, darted through the shop door.

An accident, as I afterwards learned, had lamed Droquille's companion, and thus favoured my escape. Before many seconds, however, pursuit was on my track. I soon heard its cry and clatter. The street was empty when I ran out. My echoing steps were the only sound there for some seconds. I fled with the speed of the wind.

I turned to the left down a narrow street, and from that to the right into a kind of stable lane. I heard shouting and footsteps in pursuit.

I ran for some time, but the shouting and sounds of pursuit continued.

My strength failed me; I stopped short behind a sort of buttress, beside a coach-house gate; I was hardly a second there. An almost suicidal folly prompted me. I know not why, but I stepped out again from my place of concealment, intending

to give myself up to my pursuers. I walked slowly back a few steps toward them. One was now close to me. A man without a hat, crying, "Stop, stop, police!" ran furiously past me. It clearly never entered his mind that I, walking slowly toward him, could possibly be the fugitive.

So, this moment, as I expected of perdition, passed innocuously by.

By what instinct, chance, or miracle I made the rest of my way home I know not.

When I reached the door-stone, Rebecca Torkill was standing there watching for me in irrepressible panic.

When she was sure it was I, she ran out, crying, "Oh! God be thanked, miss; it's you, my child!" She caught me in her arms, and kissed me with honest vehemence. I did not return her caress; I was worn out; it all seemed like a frightful dream. Her voice sounded ever so far away. I saw her, as raving people see objects mixed with unrealities. I did not say a word as she conveyed me up-stairs with her stalwart arm round my waist.

I heard her say, "Your mamma's better; she's quite easy now." I could not say, "Thank God!" I was conscious that I showed no trace of pleasure, nor even of comprehension, in my looks.

She was looking anxiously in my face as she talked to me, and led me into the drawing-room. I did not utter a word, nor look to the right or left. With a moan I sat down on the sofa. I was shivering uncontrollably.

Another phantom was now before me, talking with Rebecca; it was Mr. Carmel; his large, strange eyes—how dark and haggard they looked—fixed on my face with a gaze almost of agony!

Something fell from my hand on the table as my fingers relaxed. I had forgotten that I held anything in them. I saw them both look at it, and then on one another with a glance of alarm, and even horror. It was the dagger, stained with blood, that had dropped upon that homely table.

I was unable to follow their talk. I saw him take it up quickly, and look from it to me, and to Rebecca again, with a horrible uncertainty. It was, indeed, a rather sinister waif to find in the hand of a person evidently so ill as I was, especially with a mark of blood also upon that trembling hand. He looked at it again very carefully; then he put it into Rebecca's hand, and said something very earnestly.

They talked on for a time. I neither

understood nor cared what they said; nor cared, indeed, at all what became of me.

"You're not hurt, darling?" she whispered, with her earnest old eyes very near mine.

"I? No. Oh, no!" I answered.

"Not with that knife?"

"No," I repeated.

I was rapidly growing worse.

A little time passed thus, and then I saw Mr. Carmel pray with his hands clasped for a few moments, and I heard him distinctly say to Rebecca, "She's very ill. I'll go for the doctor;" and he added some words to her. He looked ghastly pale: as he gazed in my face, his eyes seemed to burn into my brain. Then another figure was added to the group; our maid glided in, and stood beside Rebecca Torkill, and, as it seemed to me, murmured vaguely. I could not understand what she or they said. She looked as frightened as the rest. I had perception enough left to feel that they all thought me dying. So the thought filled my darkened mind that I was indeed passing into the state of the dead. The black curtain that had been suspended over me for so long at last descended, and I remember no more for many days and nights.

The secret was, for the present, mine only. I lay, as the old writers say, "at God's mercy," the sword's point at my throat, in the privation, darkness, and utter helplessness of fever. Safe enough it was with me. My brain could recall nothing; my lips were sealed. But though I was speechless another person was quickly in possession of the secret.

Some weeks, as I have said, are simply struck out of my existence. When gradually the cold, grey light of returning life stole in upon me, I almost hoped it might be fallacious. I hated to come back to the frightful routine of existence.

I was so very weak that even after the fever left me, I might easily have died at any moment.

I was promoted at length to the easy-chair in which, in dressing-gown and slippers, people recover from dangerous illnesses.

There, in the listlessness of exhaustion, I used to sit for hours, without reading, without speaking, without even thinking.

Gradually, by little and little, my spirit revived, and, as life returned, the black cares and fears essential to existence glided in, and gathered round with awful faces.

One day old Rebecca, who, no doubt, had long been anxious, asked:

"How did you come by that knife, Miss Ethel, that you fetched home in your hand the night you took ill?"

"A knife? Did I?" I spoke, quietly suppressing my horror. "What was it like?"

I was almost unconscious until then that I had really taken away the dagger in my hand. This speech of Rebecca's nearly killed me. They were the first words I had heard connecting me distinctly with that ghastly scene.

She described it, and repeated her question.

"Where is it?" I asked.

"Mr. Carmel took it away with him," she replied, "the same night."

"Mr. Carmel?" I repeated, remembering, with a new terror, his connexion with Monsieur Droqville. "You had no business to allow him to see it, much less—good Heaven!—to take it."

I stood up in my terror, but I was too weak, and stumbled back into the chair.

I would answer no question of hers. She saw that she was agitating me, and desisted.

The whole scene in the jeweller's shop remained emblazoned in vivid tints and lights on my memory. But there was something more, and that perhaps the most terrible ingredient in it.

I had recognised another face beside Droqville's. It started between me and the wounded man as I recoiled from my own blow. One hand was extended toward me to prevent my repeating the stroke; the other held up the wounded man.

Sometimes I doubted whether the whole of that frightful episode was not an illusion. Sometimes it seemed only that the pale face, so much younger and handsomer than Monsieur Droqville's; the fiery eyes, the frown, the scarred forehead, the suspended smile that had for only that dreadful moment started into light before me so close to my face, were those of a spectre.

The young man who had been turning over the jewels at the counter, and who had offered to give me change for my imaginary sovereign, was the very man I had seen shipwrecked at Malory; the man who had in the wood near Plas Ylwd fought that secret duel; and who had afterwards made, with so reckless an audacity, those mad declarations of love to me; the man who, for a time, had so haunted my imagination, and respecting whom I had received warnings so dark and formidable!

Nothing could be more vivid than this picture, nothing more uncertain than its reality.

I did not see recognition in the face; all was so instantaneous. Well, I cared not. I was dying. What was the world to me? I had assigned myself to death; and I was willing to accept that fate rather than reascend to my frightful life.

My poor mother, who knew nothing of my strange adventure, had experienced one of those deceitful rallies which sometimes seem to promise a long reprieve, in that form of heart complaint under which she suffered. She only knew that I had had brain-fever. How near to death I had been she never knew. She was spared, too, the horror of my dreadful adventure.

I was now recovering rapidly and surely; but I was so utterly weak and heart-broken that I fancied I must die, and thought that they were either deceived themselves, or trying kindly, but in vain, to deceive me.

I was at length convinced by finding myself able, as I have said, to sit up. Mamma was often with me, cheered by my recovery. I dare say she had been more alarmed than Rebecca supposed.

I learned from mamma that the money that had maintained us through my illness, had come from Mr. Carmel. Little as it was, it must have cost him exertion to get it; for men in his position cannot, I believe, own money of their own.

It was very kind. I said nothing, but I was grateful; his immovable fidelity touched me deeply.

I wondered whether Mr. Carmel had often made inquiries during my illness, or had shown an interest in my recovery. But I dared not ask.

THE INTELLIGENT FOREIGNER.

CAMILLE DESMOULINS, that phosphoric promoter of the great French Revolution, once remarked that "the judgment of an intelligent foreigner is the verdict of a contemporaneous posterity." It is just possible that this neat saying, like most of those epigrammatic utterances dear to Frenchmen, has in it some slight substratum of truth. An Intelligent Foreigner, one Caius Julius Cæsar, who devoted some attention, and many hard blows, to the Gallia of twenty centuries ago, observes that the lively Gaul was even then "sudden and rash in his counsels." From this

standard his descendants have nowise degenerated, as but few Frenchmen could be found to doubt their own ability to write a full and comprehensive work on England, her government, laws, and institutions, her art, literature, and cookery, after a residence of fourteen days, or thereabouts, in the neighbourhood of Leicester-square. They are humorously conscious of this peculiarity, and playfully exult in their capacity for rapid generalisation, and innate tendency to indulge the imagination at the expense of inconvenient details.

In this connexion an anecdote is told of a celebrated Frenchman remarking to Théophile Gautier, who had made a trip into Spain, and was proposing to put his experience upon paper, that the only objection to his writing a book upon Spain was that he had committed the irreparable error of visiting that country, and had thereby crippled his natural genius by an accumulation of awkward and useless facts. This gentleman clearly agreed with Congreve's Witwoud, who considers learning a great drawback to a wit, as it gives him less opportunity of "showing his natural parts," and also with Charles Lamb's friend, who left off reading, "to the great increase of his originality."

The advantage of seeing "ourselves as others see us," has been vouchsafed to Englishmen in very liberal measure, especially during the last few years, and what our foreign critics lack in courtesy, they unquestionably make up in candour. A possible explanation of the general acidity of the Intelligent Foreigner is that, always as a nation, and very frequently as individuals, we are not calculated to inspire warm affection in the bosom of the stranger.

That we are better fellows at home than abroad appears to be conceded on all hands; but, although John Bull never shines to so much advantage as in his own house, it would seem that eyes accustomed to behold the sun can look upon the splendour of Taurus without blinking. Strange to say, neither the bluff old English style, formerly so much admired in these islands, nor the stiff, priggish, self-contained demeanour which has recently taken its place, are considered well-bred by the natives of the Continent. The fine hearty old buck who always speaks his mind, is apt to be designated "brutal," by the Intelligent Foreigner; while the young prig of the present day, who treats everybody with a coolness which, when exercised towards persons of hot temperament, is apt to

produce singular results, is denounced as stiff, discourteous, cold-blooded, and aggravatingly silent—in short, a dumb dog. Of course, we know well enough, my brethren, that these remarks are miserably unjust, and are only dictated by a paltry spirit of envy. There is (we thank Heaven) no humbug about us. We do not say one thing and mean another, nor have we yet sunk so low as to waste time on questions of precedence and fine points of politeness.

We are sound and true, my brethren, as we frequently take occasion complacently to remark, and if our heads be a little overthick, our hearts are in the right place; and a parcel of bowing and scraping foreigners who want to be made a fuss with, may go elsewhere, for we have no time to throw away in petty courtesies and empty compliments.

It is annoying, however, to find how often "these foreign fellows" come near the mark with their uncomplimentary observations, and pretty to see how, now and then, their light weapon strikes the very centre, as when Froissart accuses the English of "amusing themselves very sadly." Nothing more perfect of its kind was ever said, for it is impossible to imagine anything more ghastly than most of our attempts at merry-making, and perhaps the whole island presents no scene of dreariness comparable with a country fair. The people certainly eat and drink a great deal—possibly a great deal too much—but no single ray of gaiety illumines the dismal scene, and if the people do enjoy themselves—a fact by no means clear—then have they the most woebegone fashion of expressing hilarity of any nation upon earth.

Some intelligent foreigners, whose original prejudices have not been proof against the "rosbif," the "jambons d'Yorc," the "plum-pounding," the "portare-beer," and the "petit-vin Ecossois," or "Ouisiki," of these islands, kindly acquit us of innate national sulkiness, and put down English "morgue" and "spleen" to our abominable climate. How—they ask—can a man feel any gaiety of heart when a damp fog and a drizzling rain chill the marrow in his bones, and render him a constant victim to rheumatism and influenza? It is gratifying to find that we are not bad fellows at bottom, but that we are merely made unsociable by a vile climate, which forces us to hurry rapidly from business to our homes, giving us no opportunity to saunter about like the fortunate idlers of the Parisian

boulevards. The weather, then, would appear to be the main cause of our sulkiness; we hurry to business in the early morning through the drizzling rain and choking fog, apply ourselves severely to some form of work throughout the day, and, toil being over, plunge through the mire and slush till we reach home, where in the prim dulness of domestic life we drag on the weary hours till it is time to retire to rest.

Constant rain, eternal fog, and a life divided between the active pursuit of gain and the stupefying atmosphere of home, combine to "brutalise" the Englishman to so great an extent, that even on the rare occasions when he would fain be merry, the attempt results in a dismal failure. The mind, dwarfed by a narrow life devoted to sordid ends, refuses to brighten up; the eyes, dim with poring over ledgers, are too weary to smile; and the mouth, which consumes huge sanguinary wedges of meat, and untold quantities of fiery liquids, positively declines to laugh. In a climate like that of Albion, the poetry of life is reduced to zero. Try to imagine a lover serenading his mistress under the brumous sky of London, or the perpetual down-pour of Manchester! Fancy him strumming on a guitar—the strings much relaxed by the damp—while a shivering Leporello holds an umbrella over his unhappy master! Poor Count Almaviva would get his feet wet, catch the influenza, and probably lose that fine tenor voice of his for ever.

In more favoured climes, says our foreign friend—in Italy, and southern France, for instance—the night, as the Irish gentleman remarked, is the best part of the day, and man has a chance of pouring out his poet soul into no unwilling ears.

Beneath the dark blue sky of Italy, whether gazing on the placid waters of the Mediterranean, regarding the snowy summits of Como, or simply wandering in the lemon groves of Naples, man casts off base and ignoble thoughts, and allows his soul to soar into the infinite. To achieve this feat with entire success, a companion—a lady of like home-detesting instincts as the gentleman with the poet soul—is absolutely indispensable, while no better scene for a declaration could be imagined than the marble steps of a villa washed by the blue waters of Como, beneath a sky with a thousand stars. The senses naturally expand in the south, and the poor devil who dines upon a bunch of grapes, "acquires the idea of exquisite sensation" unattainable by the

gross consumer of beef, beer, and gin; poor as the grape-eater may be, he is never "wretched," while with us poverty signifies cold, wet, misery, and a craving hunger unendurable in our raw atmosphere. But our villanous climate has one good effect, for—inasmuch as to secure anything like health one must possess a comfortable home, and consume an abundance of stimulating food—we are compelled to be rich "in order to drive away the sad promptings of unfriendly nature."

Nothing more astonishes our Gallic friends than the minute appliances for ensuring comfort which abound in every well-ordered English interior. They marvel at the cosily carpeted bedrooms, the strips of oilcloth in front of the washstands, and the matting along the walls. They stare at our dressing-tables, rebel against the number and size of our jugs and basins, kick desperately against our multitudinous soapdishes, our immense sponges and everlasting baths, and savagely throw aside our numerous towels of different textures. They do not protest against looking glasses, but all this parade of ablation is absolutely revolting to them, and they accuse us of spending one-fifth of our lives in the tub. This indignation, this rebellion against a severe régime of cold water and rough towels, becomes perfectly intelligible when we see the washing appliances of the Continent, where a milk-jug and pie-dish are held amply sufficient for all purposes of ablation.

The rigid observance of the Sabbath is a matter of much wonderment to the Intelligent Foreigner, and the dulness of the first day of the week—due partly to English ideas of decorum and partly to the depressing influence of our frightful climate—is summed up as "simply appalling." Many years ago a French writer of the first rank declared that he would rather pass "twenty-four hours at the bottom of the well of the Great Pyramid than endure a Sunday in London."

It is only fair to our French critics to admit that they are generally gallant and truthful enough to praise the good looks of Englishwomen, but they invariably deplore the existence of a certain stiffness of manner and severity of style that they pretend to discover in the best-bred Englishwomen; and they, moreover, bitterly bewail the absence of "gracuseté" and "gentillesse" (which I take to be two of the excuses constantly put forward for Frenchwomen not being handsomer than they are). It was reserved for a rarely-gifted American

to make a furious attack on the personal appearance of English ladies. This Transatlantic critic is kind enough to say that the English maiden in her 'teens, "though very seldom so pretty as our own damsels, possesses, to say the truth, a certain charm of half-blossom, and delicately-folded leaves, and tender womanhood shielded by maidenly reserves." All of which is kind and condescending to the young woman whom he elsewhere calls "the comely, rather than pretty English girls, with their deep healthy bloom, which an American taste is apt to deem fitter for a milkmaid than for a lady." He evidently most admired a style of beauty which Englishmen, in their narrow little island, and medical professors all the world over, deem a false beauty, born of unhealthy climes, heated rooms, or late hours; in short, the style called by Frenchmen "*beauté malade*,"—verily sickly, pale, and faded—refined, doubtless, but owing its delicate, fragile charm and interesting pallor far more to the unhealthy state of—shall I say the patient?—than to any true refinement. Throughout the book of a man specially appreciative of old moss-grown walls, lichen-covered rocks, hoary castles, and venerable churches, Mr. Hawthorne, for some occult reason, steadily depreciates an "institution" worth all old-time relics a thousand times over—our living, smiling, blooming womanhood. Forsooth, our women are not like "the trim little damsels of my native land," they are as cabbage-roses, mere full-blown peonies, the coarse product of an earthy tribe. The soil and climate of England produce neither beautiful women nor delicate fruit. Our hothouse productions he is good enough to admire, but even these are "at any moment likely to relapse into the coarseness of the original stock."

But his treatment of our girls is what his Massachusetts friends would call "not a circumstance" to the furious onslaught he makes upon the British matron, or, as he kindly designates her, "the female Bull."

Ignorant islanders as we are, we have been wont to boast of the tenacity with which English ladies retain their beauty to a comparatively advanced period of life; nay, we are even given to extol our matrons at the expense of our maidens, and to expatiate on the majestic and Juno-like charms of matronhood. But it seems that we are quite benighted on this important subject. We are told that the British matron has an "awful ponderosity of frame,

not pulpy, like the looser development of our few fat women, but massive with solid beef and streaky tallow; so that (though struggling manfully against the idea) you inevitably think of her as made up of steaks and sirloins. When she walks her advance is elephantine. When she sits down," but I decline to continue the dreadful quotation, and must pause to inquire how it is that the author of the coarsest verdict ever passed by a gentleman of one country upon the ladies of another, should have been a native of the highly-punctilious and over-scrupulous country wherein a man's wife is absurdly designated his "lady," and her legs ridiculously spoken of as "limbs"? The "trim damsels" are, doubtless, "beautiful exceedingly;" and their bright eyes, blooming complexions, and lovely little feet tripping daintily over the indifferent pavement of Fifth Avenue, are a sight to see on Sundays, when the snobbish practice of promenading after church prevails. There is no American "homeliness" (as it is called) visible in the streets—the girls who are not good-looking do not go out, unless they have very fine clothes indeed.

Occasionally Frenchmen vary slightly from the great body of their countrymen in their estimate of English beauty, and while some are never tired of singing the praises of "*le teint Anglais*," and fall into raptures at the sight of our fair Amazons, others—older possibly—think them "scarcely beautiful," and find the physiognomies of our girls pure, but also "sheepish." The "folded violets" of one critic, become in the hands of a severe brother "simple babies, new waxen dolls, with glass eyes which appear entirely empty of ideas." Other faces have "become ruddy and turned to raw beefsteak;" but it is comforting to find that English girls now and then attain absolute perfection, and that the Intelligent Foreigner occasionally remains "rooted to the spot motionless with admiration," while nothing can be more amusing than his astonishment and gratified vanity when a beautiful young girl is intrusted to his care. Every glance of admiration cast upon his fair companion during a promenade in Kensington Gardens ricochets upon the Intelligent Foreigner, who swelling with importance struts along, raised to the seventh heaven of delight by the excitement caused by the beauty of his companion.

The foreign critic—let him come whence he may—is always tremendously satirical

upon the dress of Englishwomen, and never fails to point out the ill-arranged colours and consequent hideous vulgarity of English female costume.

Almost the only dress in which a Frenchman admires an Englishwoman thoroughly, completely, and without any reservation, is the riding-habit. This dress charms him, as the dark colour and graceful form of the garments subdue the redundant charms of our beauties, who resemble those of Rubens, save that the insular belle possesses greater severity of outline and a nobler type of head. But her walking and evening costume are hideously defaced by vast patches of discordant colours which irritate the critical eye of the foreigner of taste. When he meets a handsome girl "whose neck and shoulders resemble snow or mother-of-pearl," his artistic sense is shocked by a rose-coloured dress, a wreath of red flowers, green trimmings, and "a golden necklace around the throat, like a savage queen." Another great trial to him is to be found in the dreadful boots affected by our country-women. Why—he asks in despair—do Englishwomen appear to have such enormous feet? He is too gallant to abuse the extremities themselves, but puts the whole blame at the door of the shoemaker. Sometimes, however, an ugly anecdote crops up like that told of the wife of an English consul in a South American seaport, who found it impossible to get a pair of shoes made in a hurry, for the very good and sufficient reason that the whole city could not supply a last big enough.

The day of thanksgiving for the recovery of the Prince of Wales gave a foreign friend of mine a very good opportunity of seeing a large number of English people in review order. His first remark was, "What great feet they have!" I was obliged to concede that many otherwise excellent Englishwomen are unhappily guilty of possessing what a fair author once designated "useful feet," as distinguished from those dainty extremities dear to the eye of the Intelligent Foreigner, who, when in a gracious mood, is apt to admit that, after all, an Englishwoman is more thoroughly beautiful and "healthy than a Frenchwoman; but she is less agreeable, does not dress for her husband, and is unacquainted with a number of fine and delicate graces; one soon wearies beside her. Fancy a very beautiful pink peach, slightly juicy, and beside it a perfumed strawberry full of flavour."

If this hard measure be dealt unto the fair women of England, what can we, their coarser partners, expect? It appears that when young we are not repulsive, but that "the comeliness of the youthful Englishman rapidly diminishes with his years, his body appearing to grow longer, his legs to abbreviate themselves, and his stomach to assume the dignified prominence which justly belongs to that metropolis of the system." Our faces become mottled (is the "paleur maladive" or the yellowish hue of a drum-head more beautiful, I wonder!), and we develop innumerable extra chins not included in the original contract with nature.

No doubt there are people who think a little round plump Frenchman, or an angular, long-necked American, a more beautiful object than an Englishman, weighing some twelve or fourteen stone, especially when the latter is badly dressed, as is, we are informed, generally the case. We are not so "trim" forsooth as the "dandy Broadway swell" who, shaved, scraped, oiled, gummed, and "fixed" generally within an inch of his life, resembles nothing so much as a barber's block. The men of this country are generally divided by foreign observers into two great types: First, the athletic, muscular, square-shouldered type; a sort of respectable Guy Livingstone, strong, steady, earnest, and ambitious, pushing his way sturdily along in the narrow groove or speciality he has selected, striding fiercely onward, neither looking to the right nor to the left, and crushing, mayhap, a few weaker brethren under his heavy boots, a good fighter and an honest fellow, but possibly a harsh father, a tyrannical husband. Second, the phlegmatic type, heavy, dull, overladen with adipose tissue, an accumulator of facts, but utterly devoid of the power of generalisation; hence, a man of great information but few ideas, and those few taken at second-hand; a good man this, kind, pleasant, and hospitable in his fat way, a keen man in business, but simply bland and incapable out of it, a believer in all insular articles of faith, a steady church-goer, a justice of the peace, mayhap an M.P., but a dull dog withal.

Occasionally these Britons, "dull" and "dour," make a heavy-handed attempt at festivity, and the only possible form under which they are capable of enjoying themselves is a dinner. Nothing, either political, charitable, or commemorative, can be done without dining upon it, and it is even doubted whether an "Englishman will

be able to reconcile himself to any future state of existence from which the earthly institution of dinner shall be excluded. The idea of dinner has so imbedded itself among his highest and deepest characteristics, so illuminated itself with intellect, and softened itself with the kindest emotions of his heart, so linked itself with Church and State, and grown so majestic with long hereditary customs and ceremonies, that by taking it utterly away, death, instead of putting the final touch to his perfection, would leave him infinitely less complete than we have already known him. He could not be roundly happy. Paradise, among all its enjoyments, would lack one daily felicity which his sombre little island possessed."

For a people whose consummation of all earthly bliss is a dinner, we are singularly incapable of producing a meal, either toothsome or wholesome. Quantity is aimed at instead of quality, and the foreigner is horror-struck at the crudeness and vastness of a British banquet.

The huge fishes, so much admired in London, disgust the more refined taste of the Frenchman, while the fiery sauces so often served at English tables, scarify his palate and produce on him the "effect of having swallowed a lighted firework." The detestable insular fashion of cooking vegetables in plain water, and serving them to accompany wedges of meat cut from Homeric joints, also comes in for some well-merited castigation. But there is one redeeming feature in this gloomy picture of British gastronomy—a fish-dinner at Greenwich. But even at the Trafalgar, the Intelligent Foreigner declares that he feels, in presence of the endless courses of fish, more like a student in a museum of ichthyology than a guest at an excellent dinner. Again he comes to grief among our incendiary condiments, and being entrapped into eating some salmon cutlets (probably dressed with West Indian pickles), finds his mouth converted into a raging furnace. Another dish (probably curry), works its wicked ill upon our unfortunate friend, who, amazed and incensed, marvels at the superhuman thirst engendered by this Tartarean food. But these "energetically spiced" dishes pale before the whitebait, a tiny fish, who "in volume is to the bleak as the pike is to the whale," and in flavour is utterly indescribable, for, compared with these charming little fishes, the "smelt is coarse, and the gudgeon disgusting."

Our after-dinner oratory appears to ex-

cite very different emotions in the inhabitants of various countries. The Gaul generally likes our speechifying, and is as much surprised and delighted at the neatness of a post-prandial oration as he is by the clear business-like unrheterical tone of a parliamentary debate; but an American critic denounces our utterances as ragged and shapeless, containing often a sufficiency of good sense, but in a frightfully disorganised mass. Moreover, it would seem that we (not knowing any better) positively like this clumsiness, and that if an orator be glib we distrust him. We dislike smartness, and the stronger and heavier the thoughts of an orator the better, provided there be an element of commonplace running through them.

Apart from his heavy and indigestible banquets, the morose islander has one grand holiday, one stupendous merry-making, a strange, unique festival, the free manifestation of a free people, with which no French festival is comparable—the Derby. On this subject the Intelligent Foreigner (possibly incited thereto by the success of Gladiateur a few years since) endeavours to exhibit at once a proper enthusiasm and a respectable accuracy. The day has gone by for the tremendous blunders once made by Frenchmen when dealing with our tight little island. Scarcely yet have they mastered our proper names, and still persist in speaking of Sir Peel, or Sir Dilke, and of Lord Dirry-Moir, more familiarly known as Tom-Jim-Jack, but they no longer describe an English gentleman as driving a friend to the Tower of London in his cabriolet drawn by a "celebrated mare who had thrice won the Derby." The Intelligent Foreigner of to-day is wonderfully well informed concerning the minutest details of *Le Sport*. He visits racing-stables, and is enchanted at the sublime order and discipline which reign in those elegant, but slightly expensive, establishments. He is charmed to find that celebrated racers, steeds of high renown, have their favourite cats, who alone are permitted to rest on the glossy backs which have carried the fortunes of millions.

He is vastly amused at the setting in of the Derby fever, a well-known epidemic, which spreads from the turf market to all classes of society; he loves to see the confidence of people who bet furiously on horses they have never seen. Women, nay, even children, do not escape the malady. The boy, "crawling like a snail unwillingly to school," may have forgotten to learn his

lessons, but "ask him the names of the favourites for the Derby, and he knows them by heart." The Intelligent Foreigner is seized with amazement at the wonderful spectacle of parliament suspending its sitting on the Derby Day, and carried away himself by the—till then—undiscovered liveliness of his English friends, he goes down to Epsom by road. Down the road and on the Downs he is delighted with everything, and even yields a reluctant tribute of admiration to the "turfmen belonging to the higher classes. The latter had made all their bets long previously, and many of them had heavy sums at stake; but they affected that air of haughty calmness and indifference which well-born Englishmen regard in critical moments as a proof of education and moral strength."

The good humour and universal merriment which prevail are delightful to the foreigner, and the thoroughly democratic character of the festival lends it an additional charm. For once the stranger confesses the inferiority of similar institutions in his own land, and owns that a French racecourse is a dull scene compared with one of ours, but, adds he, "There is as much difference between the races at Chantilly and the Derby as between a rustic festival of Watteau and Rubens's famous Kermesse."

Sad to say, the Kermesse element comes out very strongly towards evening, and the return by road provokes from the Intelligent Foreigner some rather sharp remarks on the fibre of coarse brutality, which assumes hideous proportions in the Briton when under the influence of abundant meat and drink, and a feverish excitement at other times unknown to his phlegmatic temperament.

On most occasions, and especially among large crowds of people, a painful effect is produced upon the foreigner by the gradual degradation of fashionable articles of dress. In this country there is no distinctive dress for different classes, and the natural sequence is that articles of costume pass from hand to hand until the fashionable garment, which once clothed the dainty form of the exquisite, degenerates into the rags which barely keep the wintry wind from the shivering limbs of the beggar. In a Kentish hop-field this peculiar destiny of English old clothes springs into almost ludicrous visibility, as it is by no means rare to see a barefooted hop-picker adorned with the soiled and faded fragments of a bonnet which once perhaps excited envy and ad-

miration in the Ladies' Mile. Discouraging of old clothes and shabby subjects generally, the foreigner feels a terrible pang on offering a fee to the lady-like girl who shows him over Shakespeare's house, and is shocked at finding her accept the guerdon without the slightest hesitation. He hits us very severely when he says that "nobody need fear to hold out half a crown to any person with whom he has occasion to speak a word in England." This is severe enough, but does not its severity lie in its truth? Why does almost every English person of whom you ask the way, or of whom you demand the slightest information or the smallest service, immediately feel his heart bound within him at the prospect of possible beer?

The Intelligent Foreigner is generally subdued by English beer. Even the plebeian compound known as shandy-gaff finds favour in his eyes. Ginger-beer alone is too pungent, but Trinity ale and Oxford "Archdeacon" delight him greatly, especially the latter. "John Barleycorn has given his very heart to this admirable liquor; it is a superior kind of ale, the prince of ales, with a richer flavour and a mightier spirit than you can find elsewhere in this weary world." Occasionally our kind critics drop a tear over the day when we sank from a wine-sipping into a beer-drinking generation, and marvel that the hop-grounds have displaced the ancient vineyards of Kent. One singularly appreciative traveller at once describes the true reason of the decline of vine-growing in England. The old chroniclers, he says, "gilded the grapes with fancy colours." No reasonable doubt can be entertained that wine grown from English grapes must have been abominably bad; but then it may not be generally known that good wine is a modern invention, and that really drinkable vinous fluids are not more than about two hundred years old. Henri Quatre, who would certainly have known good wine from bad—had any good liquor existed in his day—was very fond of the wine of Suresnes, a severe and cutting beverage facetiously alluded to by Parisian jokers when they wish to quote the meanest kind of "petit bleu."

The Intelligent Foreigner, then, has surveyed our country very thoroughly; has been up and down, and to and fro, in it. He has travelled from Land's End to John o' Groats, has taken notes, and has not found all barren. Mayhap he has spied out the weakness of the land, but then he

has found much to admire. He is never tired of praising the admirable training for public business undergone by many Englishmen, and he is delighted to think that if a second and more successful Guy Fawkes were to blow (which Heaven forefend!) Her Majesty the Queen, the Prince of Wales, the rest of the royal family, the Lords spiritual and temporal, and the faithful Commons into the air, "merely the apex of the structure would be destroyed," and that we should all rally round our local chiefs, and proceed regularly and legally to rebuild the injured edifice of the Constitution. Our tendency to abide by the law at all hazards receives from him a generous tribute of praise, while the spotless ermine of our judges excites, not only his astonishment, but his admiration. He respects our steady dogged determination and our untiring energy. He stands amazed at the wonders of our great hives of industry, and is almost appalled by commercial undertakings of such gigantic magnitude as to invest commerce herself with a halo of poetry.

He admires our horses, our trees, and our boys, although he fancies that the rough training of our public schools develops the coarse fibre which in manhood ripens into hardness, obstinacy, and tyranny. He pays his tribute of respect to our lord mayor, "and the rest of the aristocracy;" enjoys the manifold comforts of an English home, appreciates whitebait, and holds Bass and Allsopp not only as merchant princes, but as benefactors to their species. But he perceives with sorrow that the vaunted prosperity of England has a "seamy side," and that the spacious robe of cloth of gold, which hangs so gracefully from the shoulders of Britannia, is hardly ample enough to conceal the narrow vestments of poverty, and the squalid rags of the drunkard. He does not deny that we are powerful and capable men, well calculated to push our broad shoulders forward in the world; but he thinks that we crowd and push overmuch, and that the "struggle for existence" is too severe, especially in a country where sound, solid, "financial" success is accepted as the only test of merit, where "devil take the hindmost," and "the weakest must go to the wall," are accepted as popular proverbs. He seems, at times, almost to envy our material prosperity, but pities the dreary monotony of our lives, devoted entirely to work, and to the slavish observance of certain social conventionalities. Finally, he

doubts whether in the whole melancholy history of human blundering any misnomer was ever invented more thoroughly ridiculous than that of "Merrie England."

FOR LOVE.

CURLY-HAIRED Carl! Were a blithesomer mate
For a ride o'er the snow to be wished for than he?
Yet were it well not to linger too late,
The pines are in shadow, the flakes dance and fleo.
Crisp on the white sound the patter and clack
Of hoofs beating briskly, and sharp through the air
Rises ripple of laughter; the bridles hang slack,
And hand touches hand. She is frolic and fair,
Sunny-eyed Marguerite, brightest of girls,
With teeth gleaming whitely and tumble of curls.

"You! Gallant Carl, so they call you! No doubt,
Bayard the brave were a whipster to you!"
Gretchen the winsome can wickedly flout,
Red curling lips and arch eyes flashing blue
Wing home her taunts. So he flushes and sets
Teeth under lips that are wreathed in a smile;
"Now true, mocking sprite, to your feign'd regrets
At fair chivalry's flight. Give me glances the while,
And what man may dare to win loyalty's meed,
I, Carl and no Bayard, will venture at need."

Quick rings her laughter; sledge bells at full flight
Never sounded more silverly musical. "You?
Easy is talking, Sir spur-lacking knight;
Were death at my lips, sirrah, what would you do?"
Curly-haired Carl bendeth suddenly. "Hawk
Should stoop straight to its quarry," laughs she as her
lips

Deftly evade him. "Sir Carl, you can talk,
But you do not strike home; feeble sword, sir, that slips.
What dare you—for love?" Smileth Carl, "It were best
Oh, vow-flouting lady, to wait till the test."

On through the snow, for the wood shadows blacken,
The night wind is waking, the pine branches sigh.
They laugh as they fly, for their speed may not slacken,
"Now swift! Stride for stride, Carl!" Hist! What is
that cry?

Faces mirth-flushed and wind-bitten, go white,
Deep bite the spur-points and bridles shake free.
Didst e'er hear the yelling of wolves through the night?
Harsh hoarse devils' music that murders all glee.
Now Broken, now Fleetfoot, give proof of your pace,
For hundred mouth'd death is behind in full chase.

One breathless mile is ticked off from the three,
By heart-beats that throb to the pulses of fear.
Swift! Flash along! Flying skirts, tresses free;
For death on the track yelleth near and more near.
"Courage!" cries Carl, "we've the pace of them yet.
White is her face, and her breath shudders short.
Watchful his eyes, and his teeth tightly set.
"Bravo, brave Broken! Well leapt!" Never port
More eagerly looked for by storm-driven bark,
Than the red village lights as they flash through the
dark!

Two breathless miles! But the swift-sweeping pack
Of mad, yelling demons have gained in its flight.
Oh God! half a mile, and her gallop is slack.
Those hell-litened eyes, how they gleam through the
night!

But one minute more. "Gracious Heaven above,
Too late! Now the test!" Then his voice ringeth loud
"Ride on, and farewell! But remember!—for Love!"
Then right in the path of the hideous crowd,
Brave Carl hath drawn bridle and leapt to the ground,
And a hundred hot hell-hounds have hemmed him
around.

Yon little brown woman belle Marguerite?—Nay,
Brave Carl as you know, is beau garçon no more.
Those devil-hounds marked him. We fellows made play
Not a second too soon. Ah! the hideous roar

Of rage and base fear from that hot-throated pack
As we plunged, Heaven-sent, through the pines in their
rear,

Two dozen lank demons stretched dead in a crack!
But Carl, gallant Carl! oh! the sickening fear
That struck to my heart as I lifted his head,
His bonny boy-face all so furrowed and red.

He lived, scarred and seamed as you know him. I hold
No battle-marks borne with more honour. But she?
Beauty seeks beauty. She shrank and grew cold,
Slowly, half shamed, but—the thing had to be—
“Not heart enough for the trial?” Just so,
Many a winsome one fails at the push.
Carl has the little brown woman. I know
She hasn’t belle Marguerite’s sparkle and flush;
But she has the secret that sets her above
The shallow-bright sort. She would die, sir, “for Love!”

GALLOPING DICK.

It is about two hundred years since the skeleton of Galloping Dick rattled in its rusty chains on Maltby Heath. He had kept the country side in mortal fear for ten or a dozen years, before the law laid him by the heels, and justice hanged him by the neck. And ten or a dozen years of successful robbery, cruelty, and murder, were enough to sink his soul for ever to a perdition beyond the ordinary experience of sinful souls. So at least they believed about Maltby; and the unlaid spirit of Galloping Dick became by time and tradition an evil power haunting the heath, and boding sorrow, or worse, to whomsoever it might encounter.

Scarcely a winter passed without some awful report of Galloping Dick’s perturbed spirit having been seen or heard thundering across the heath—reports which struck terror to the hearts of the boldest, and silenced the few sceptics who were disposed to make light of the danger. Make light of the danger, when the most terrible fate overtook the doomed wretches who had met this awful spirit? A danger as sure as death is nothing to make light of, said the more reverent souls; and the history of the people bore them out.

Did not old George Graham’s father see the ghost, and did not his eldest son take to bad courses that very next spring, enlist for a soldier, desert, run home, and be taken from his mother’s fireside in handcuffs to barracks, and there shot? This was in the times when George the Third was king, and men were shot without more ado if they turned their backs on their colours. Did not Ennis Blake see Galloping Dick some thirty years ago now, and did not his daughter Bella disappear from Maltby with the fine London gentleman who came, as it might be, from the clouds

—and never a word heard of her again till the carrier brought the news that she had been hanged at Newgate for child murder? And Farmer Crosse, did he not lose wife and stock one season when all his neighbours foddered the best beasts they ever fattened, and gathered rich harvests till their barns overflowed like bursting bags? They had not seen Galloping Dick, but Farmer Crosse had; and who could doubt the inference?

These were the most striking instances that floated about the talk of the country side, and kept the belief in the spectre alive. But there were numberless other cases where mischief could be traced to the hour when Galloping Dick was heard to rush past the house at dead of night, or when he had been seen dimly through the mists of evening, or flying like a shadow in the distant moonlight. When or in what manner soever he made his troubled existence manifest, there was sure to be sorrow and loss; and the name of Galloping Dick was still able to scare all the parishioners of Maltby, and to work like a crooked charm wherever it was pronounced.

Down in the hollow, at the end of Three Ash-lane, lived the Miss Sinclairs. They were two old ladies, spinsters and sisters, owning a pretty large bit of land, of a less poor and hungry kind than most of the land thereaway. They managed it of course very badly, and got but two pounds where others would have made four. They were miserly old ladies, and starved both themselves and their farm. They believed in teapots and stockings, and odd chinks in the wall and chimney jambs, and such like hiding-places for their money, instead of favouring investments where you never know what becomes of it, or who has it; or instead of putting it into the land for the rain to spoil, and the frost to nip, and the tenant to filch by hook or by crook. They were generally reported to be millionaires at least, and supposed to have lined their little wooden house with unseen gold. The whole neighbourhood knew, as a fact, that they slept on a bed stuffed more thickly with sovereigns than with goose feathers. And when any stranger doubted the tale, and spoke of the discomfort of such an arrangement, the Maltby folk answered significantly that may be most men would take the discomfort for the sake of the stuffing.

They kept only one servant, and they never kept her long. For, being like birds

in the way of appetite, they could not be made to see the difference between a young, healthy, hardworking wench of eighteen or so, and themselves, wizened, withered old maids of sixty odd, whose vital juices were so dried up that they wanted next to no nourishment, and whose activities in the house consisted only in incessant maundering and pottering; which gave them just a little gentle exercise, and prevented their old joints from becoming completely rusty. Still, though they did little that was of any use, they were always on their feet; always on the alert; with their sharp eyes looking into everything, and their sharper speech that never spared a fault nor glossed over a mistake. They were bad to live with, undoubtedly; and by degrees they so entirely lost the confidence of the neighbourhood, that not a mother among them all would let her daughter take service at the Sinclairs', and the very parish at last refused them an apprentice when they wanted one. This, then, was how it came about that Madge Bernard, a kind of far-away cousin in humble circumstances, came on a visit to her relatives at Three Ash-lane, with the understanding that she was to make herself generally useful in return for bed and board, "and a trifle or so of clothes and pocket money," which they offered her widowed mother by letter, with a few fair words put in by way of garnish and embroidery.

The first week that Madge came she cried without ceasing; the second she sulked; the third she was pert; but on the fourth she took a turn, as Miss Priscilla, the younger of the two old ladies, said with a sigh of satisfaction, and seemed as if she meant to settle and take things as she found them. She wrote a great many letters this week; and among them three to a Mr. John Collette—three long crossed letters, as the Miss Sinclairs knew; but they knew no more. If they were sharp-eyed, Madge was sharp-witted; and if they knew how to pry, she knew still better how to hide. Still, three letters in one week to any Mr. John Collette in the world, seemed a wicked waste of time, as well as an abominable act of forwardness, to the spinsters; who made it their boast that never a man had dared to offer them love when they were young, and that they had not been like the hussies of the present day—with more hair on the outside of their heads than they had sense in, and as keen after husbands as so many wasps after honey.

It had been autumn when Madge Bernard had brought her florid beauty and her deal boxes, with very little in them, to the mean wooden house where the two ladies lived; thinking she was going for a pleasant visit to a couple of old dears who would make her welcome, and give her lots of pretty things, and finding instead that she was simply an unengaged servant without perquisites or wages. It was winter now; but Madge still stayed on. Had she really reconciled herself to her sordid life and loveless home, or was she only waiting? Waiting?—for what? Who knew? Certainly not the sister spinsters, with all their astuteness. If any one, only Madge herself, and, perhaps, Mr. John Collette.

The winter set in wild and hard. It was the stormiest within the memory of man; and life at Three Ash-lane was gloomy and oppressive almost beyond endurance. Madge Bernard thought the long chill hours would never pass. Within the house cold grates and an empty cupboard, uncarpeted floors, uncurtained windows, a bed of musty "oat flint," not half filled, and no society but that of two stingy, lean, and crabbed old maids, made a not too joyous home life for lusty pleasure-loving youth. Without, wild winds and cloudy skies, sharp storms of stinging hail, of drenching rain, of blinding snow, kept the girl from her lonely rambles about the heath, which up to now had been her only amusement. It was a dreary time; and the only joy left her was when the Maltby carrier stopped at the end of the lane, and, doing duty for the foot post, came tramping through the snow up to the door of the little house, bringing her an envelope with the London mark on it, and four or five pages inside, written close, in a neat commercial hand. What was in these letters no one had the chance of knowing. For Madge, unlike girls in general with their love letters—and of course they were love letters, said the sisters—invariably burnt them as soon as read, and even stamped out the blackened ashes on the hearth. It was evident, however, that they made her anxious, as well as gave her pleasure.

Miss Priscilla, who was a trifle the more suspicious, and the keener-eyed of the two sisters, noticed that. She added to it also another glimpse into the depths she could not fathom, that Madge had got into the habit of prowling about the house a great deal more than was necessary. She had even caught her ferreting in the damp hole they called the kitchen, at dead

of night, when she ought to have been fast asleep in her bed; and she was always putting her finger into holes and crevices, and poking her nose into covered jars of mouldy fat and the like, said Miss Priscilla fretfully to Miss Agatha, below her breath. And the two shook their forefingers viciously, and said if she was on that scent she should go, ay, this very week! But she did not go. She only peeped, and peered, and fingered more than ever, and wrote longer letters to Mr. John Collette in London.

The evening had drawn in bleak and wild. The wind roared in the trees, and whistled round the house, as if a legion of demons were calling to each other. You might fancy you heard all sorts of sounds in the blustering blasts. There were sighs and groans, mad shrieks and plaintive cries. Now it seemed as if a host of winged things were flying past, now as if an army were thundering over the heath. Nature was in one of her great hours of pain and wrath; and humanity suffered with her.

"What a night!" shivered Miss Priscilla, as she drew her scanty garments tighter round her, and uneasily moved the solitary candle, which lighted the bare deal table on which it stood, and lighted little else.

"You keep such bad fires," said Madge Bernard, quietly. She had been very quiet and amiable for the last day or two. "Such a handful of damp peat as that! Why, you must expect to shiver!"

"Shiver, indeed! If I and my sister, who are so much older and more delicate, can keep warm, a young thing like you ought not to complain," snapped Miss Agatha.

"I did not complain; I only observed," said Madge, tossing her bright brown head. "What a night!" she echoed, as the wind burst out into a furious blast that rocked the wooden house like a cradle; "just the night for Galloping Dick!"

"Hush, Madge!" said Miss Priscilla, sternly. "I do not like such talk."

"Not like such talk, Miss Priscilla? In the name of fortune, why? You don't mean to say that you believe in Galloping Dick?" returned the girl.

"It makes no matter to you what I believe," said Miss Priscilla.

"No, no matter at all," said Miss Agatha, as chorus.

Madge looked saucy but she spoke demurely. "I think it does," she answered. "You are so much older than I am, and know so much better, that what you believe

ought of course to have some weight with me. And it has, I assure you. So tell me about Galloping Dick. Is he ever seen now?"

"Do be quiet, girl!" repeated Miss Priscilla, but less angrily than before. "It is a bad sign to talk of him. And such a night as it is, too!"

"But I want to know all about him," insisted Madge. "Bad sign! What nonsense! What harm can there come of talking of him? Tell me about him, Miss Priscilla. Ah, now do! You talk so well. I know that he was a highwayman who was hanged at Gallows End about two hundred years ago; I don't want to hear more about that; only about him now. When was he seen last?"

"About five years ago," said Miss Priscilla in a half-whisper.

Terrible as the subject was, and much as she dreaded to talk of it, she had the true feminine love of the horrible, and enjoyed frightening herself as much as most women. Besides, Madge's insistence bore her down, and her little bit of flattery warmed her.

"And then what happened?" asked the girl.

"The rectory caught fire, and Miss Alice was burnt to death," said Priscilla.

"How dreadful," said Madge in a low voice. "Something bad, then, always happens when he is heard?"

"Always," said Priscilla, solemnly.

"Have you ever heard him, Miss Priscilla?"

"I, girl?" — she shuddered visibly. "Heaven forbid! If I were to hear Galloping Dick I should not expect to live till morning! My mother did, I believe, before my father died; but we never speak of that."

"It would be very frightful certainly," said Madge. "I wonder what would happen if we heard him?"

"Death," said Priscilla.

"I wish you would be quiet, you two," broke in Miss Agatha. "You have made my flesh creep. I shan't sleep to-night with all your horrors; and such a night, too, as you said, Priscilla."

"Hark! what is that?" cried Madge, suddenly, clutching at the table with a scared look on her face.

And, surely enough, as she spoke they heard distinctly the sound of a horse's hoofs thundering madly along the road, while a loud cry rose above the wild tumult of the night, more like the cry of a wild beast in

fear, or the cry of a soul in pain, than the voice of a living man.

"God save us!" cried Miss Priscilla, rising and flinging up her hands. "What shall we do? oh, what shall we do? It is Galloping Dick, sister!—our time has come!"

Sister Agatha, who was of softer stuff than Priscilla, fell forward on the table half insensible. Madge, flushed to the roots of her hair, rose too, her lips apart, her heart beating fast.

"Miss Priscilla!" she stammered out, as if terror had broken her voice; "what was that? Was it really Galloping Dick?"

"Hush! not another word," said Priscilla. "We have said too much already."

"Hark! there it is again," cried Madge. And again the horse's hoofs dashed furiously past the house, close to the very door, and again the cry seemed to penetrate into each corner, and to pierce the brain of each listener. Then the sound suddenly ceased, and the wind seemed to blow more furiously than before.

In a few moments a loud knocking was heard at the door, and a man's voice, saying, "Help! help! for mercy's sake, let me in!" recalled the women from the terrors of the unseen to the actualities, perhaps the dangers, of the visible world.

"No, no!" shrieked Miss Priscilla; "we can't take you in, whoever you may be."

"Oh, Miss Priscilla, what a cruelty! In such awful weather, and with that dreadful thing that has just passed! You must let him in—a poor lost stranger—what harm can he do?" cried Madge.

"I will not," she said, passionately. "Let him in! Why, who knows? he may have come to murder us all. He may be Galloping Dick himself!"

The knocking was repeated.

"Help!" said the voice in a tone of anguish. "If you are Christians, save me!"

"No; go away," gasped Priscilla.

"Shame! you are no woman," cried Madge, as if deeply moved. "If you will not, then I will," she added; and before Miss Priscilla could stay or hinder her, she had darted to the door, and the next instant had flung it wide to the black night, and to the stranger standing there.

As she opened it a man staggered in, and sank down on the nearest chair. He was pale and haggard; so pale, indeed, that his face looked as if it were made of chalk. His dark long hair hung dank and dripping on to his shoulders; his heavy

black moustache and beard, that almost concealed his features, were also streaming with wet; and his whole appearance was that of a man fairly overcome with terror. And yet his sinister face, with its small, greenish-coloured eyes and hooked nose, was more watchful than seemed quite to accord with his harassed bearing; and a keen observer might have seen just one glance pass between him and Madge that did not look quite like the glance of strangers.

"Water!" he gasped. "I am dying."

"What is it?" asked Madge, who had suddenly taken the command of everything; "who has hurt you?"

"No living man," replied the stranger, in a broken voice! "Something too dreadful to see and live." He shuddered as he spoke—shuddered so strongly that Madge was fain to hold the mug to his lips herself, his nerveless hands just resting on her strong white arms.

"Did you see It?" half sobbed Miss Priscilla, who was now standing by her sister.

"I saw It," repeated the stranger, and let his head fall against the shoulder of the girl.

"He is half dead with cold and terror," said Madge. "We must keep him till he recovers."

She pushed him quietly back in his chair; and if Miss Priscilla had not been too much dazed with all that was passing round her, she would have seen her hurriedly brush off a broad white mark from her stuff dress where his forehead had rested.

Without another word Madge drew Miss Agatha's own sacred arm-chair closer to the fire, heaped up the peat and coal with a lavish hand, and without leave or license asked, went to the cupboard where she knew the private stores were kept, and with one wrench forced the crazy old lock, and brought out a bottle of brandy.

"Madge!" shrieked Miss Priscilla.

"Be quiet," said Madge, turning suddenly upon her with a dark look. "Am I going to let a man die before my eyes for the sake of your meanness?"

"You are good," said the stranger, feebly. "May you be rewarded!"

There was something in all this that utterly dominated the sisters; for by this time Miss Agatha had come to her full senses again, and was looking on, trembling in every limb. The strange manner in which Madge had assumed the upper hand, and the sudden display of strength,

almost of threatening, that she made, would of itself have scared them; but when to this was added the terror of the passing spectre, and the infinite dread which the stranger inspired, the poor old ladies collapsed, and sat still, afraid to remonstrate yet unwilling to acquiesce.

So the time passed till it grew into the night; and still no one stirred. For the last hour no one had spoken. The stranger sat half dozing by the fire; Madge busied herself in making up a kind of shakedown on the floor, taking no heed of the terrified anguish of the two sisters as she dived into recesses, and dragged about, as if they were of no account, the things which they knew held their richest and most sacred deposits. Then, when all was done, she roused the man, and bade him see what she had prepared for him; and, taking the candle, peremptorily bade the old ladies go to bed.

"Go to bed and leave a stranger in the house by himself? No," said Miss Priscilla, despair giving her the momentary semblance of courage.

"You had better," said Madge, fixing her eyes on the spinster; and her look was not pleasant.

"Are you the mistress, or am I?" retorted Priscilla.

"You were; I am," replied Madge. "Now will you go?"

The dozing man opened his eyes a little more. If his big black beard had not covered his mouth, you might have seen it smile, as he whispered very softly to himself, "Bravo, young bull-dog!"

"Are you mad, girl?" cried Miss Priscilla, her shrill voice rising to a scream.

"Not now. I was when I came," she answered. "That is not the question, however. Will you go to bed or not?"

"I will not!" said the old lady. "You have no good reason for wishing us to leave this room. Who are you? and why have you brought this man here?"

"Well, if you won't act like a wise woman you must suffer like a fool—like a couple of fools," said Madge, quietly. "I wanted to spare you; but you are anxious to be made uncomfortable. Don't blame me, that is all!"

The stranger turned his head; his eyes were wide open now. "Ready, Madge?" he said, lazily.

"Yes, quite ready," she answered. "You won't have much trouble."

In the morning, which broke calm and clear, a farmer, going to his work, passed

the house at Three Ash-lane. The door stood wide open, and there were strange marks about the threshold; dints of a horse's hoofs, bits of broken pottery, ends and tags of parti-coloured rags. The place looked as if something were amiss; so he knocked at the door, and then, getting no answer, walked in.

Bound in two chairs, and gagged, were the two sisters Sinclair. On the hearth burned still some dying embers; and an empty brandy bottle was on the table. The floor was strewn, like the threshold, with fragments of pottery and rags of cloth and linen; and there was not a drawer, a cupboard, a crevice throughout the house that had not been ransacked. Here and there, among the rubbish on the floor, glittered a golden coin; here and there a silver one. The gain had evidently been heavy when the robbers could afford to leave such spoil.

The farmer, who had his own griefs, too, against the ladies, unfastened their bands, and raised them tenderly enough from their chairs. One sister, Agatha, fell a corpse into his arms; the other, Miss Priscilla, was paralysed and an idiot. All that she could say, when she was unbound, was "Galloping Dick," pointing to the door. But she answered no questions, gave no other clue. Where, then, was Madge Bernard? the bonny brown-haired girl who had been pitied many a time by the neighbours when they had met her, so far better than her fate as she seemed! The country was soon astir, and the village folk searched far and wide for the missing girl. It was evident that a cruel robbery had been committed; and the honest souls feared even worse things for the only strong and possibly dangerous guardian of the house. She must have made a brave resistance; and been punished perhaps by death. So they searched for her for days, all through the woods, and all over the heath, and turned up one or two spots where they thought the ground looked as if it had been disturbed, and where she might have been buried. They found no trace of her however, search as they might. She had passed into space and darkness, and was never heard of again.

The only persons who could have told of her were a young man and woman sitting in a small coffee-shop in Liverpool, waiting for the moment of embarkation. He was a thickset fair-haired man, with a smooth face, small greenish-coloured eyes, and a hooked nose. She

was a buxom, handsome girl with purple-black hair, and a skin as dark as a gipsy's — or walnut-juice. They did not speak to each other, but they both read from the same newspaper the account of a terrible tragedy that had taken place on Maltby Heath, with the evidence of the farmer and others of Galloping Dick having been seen and heard that dreadful night. And some added their belief that, if the dead could speak, it would be found that the spectre had had more of a hand in the business than folks allowed. Evidence, which the coroner pooh-poohed; and even dropped some hints of Madge not being dead at all, and the thing having been planned. But the young man and woman embarked on board their vessel before those hints were taken up and acted on. And thus the clue to the story was lost, and never found again.

They reached Australia in safety; but after such a perilous passage that one old sailor, who came from Devonshire, used to go about the deck muttering: "As sure as old Nick there's a murderer aboard!" Still, bad times pass after a spell, and the bad time of the voyage passed. The ship sailed into harbour, substantially none the worse for the unsuspected Jonahs she carried, and the young man and woman invested a good bit of money in a sheep run, and began life fairly enough. They never prospered, however. Things went wrong, first one way and then another; and when the young woman died—and she died, the worn-out drudge of a drunken husband, with a strange black mark on her chest that was never clearly explained away—her last words were, like poor Miss Priscilla Sinclair's, "Galloping Dick." But she added what Miss Priscilla had not said, "I have deserved it!"

A BRAZILIAN MARKET AT SUNRISE.

MORNING in Brazil — a bright, clear, winter morning in the beginning of June. At my feet, as I stand on the terrace of the Castle Hill at Rio, the silent city lies outspread like a map, and from the encircling mountains the morning mists roll off like the smoke of a battle, as peak after peak catches the broadening sunlight, till all above and below is one blaze of glory. And then, all in a moment, the grand features of the scene start into life; the boundless expanse of the smooth, sunlit bay,

where all the navies of the world might ride at anchor; the purple islets that stud its glittering surface, and the forest of masts which bristles in front of the town; the grey scowling fortresses, and dainty little villas, dotted like chessmen along the further shore; the grand outline of the Serra dos Orgoas* looming upon the northern horizon; the vast ring of purple mountains, rising starkly up thousands of feet against the lustrous sky, conspicuous among which stand the spear-pointed crest of Pedro Bonito and the mighty ridge of the Corcovado; the wilderness of broad white streets, and waving woods, and traceried church-towers, and smooth green hill-sides, and terraced gardens, and frowning rocks, and, far to the eastward, the vast black cone of the famous "Sugar-loaf" (the Matterhorn of Brazil), to the roughness of whose granite surface my gashed fingers still bear woeful testimony.

As yet, even in this land of early rising, the great city is very silent and unpeopled; but amid the universal stillness there is an appearance of bustle in one spot—the strip of neutral ground lying between the harbour and the upper end of the Rua Direita, the Oxford-street of Rio de Janeiro. I instantly recollect the whereabouts of the great market, and recollect, too, that I have hitherto given it only a hasty glance in passing, and that now is the time to atone for my neglect. No sooner said than done; I descend the Castle Hill by a series of flying leaps from point to point, to the manifest amusement of the mulatto washer-women who are drying their linen upon the surrounding bushes, traverse a network of narrow, dingy, ill-paved alleys, the very sight of which carries me back at once to Damascus and Jerusalem, and emerge upon the broad white wilderness of the Largo do Paço, with the tall candelabra-like towers of the great church on my left, the long low front of the quiet little palace on my right, and in the foreground a handful of soldiers on parade, black men and white men alternating in the ranks like a half-finished game of chess.

Abutting upon the further corner of the square is a deep quadrangular basin, forming one of three great landing-places of the town; and along two sides of this basin runs a huge vaulted piazza, the rows of stalls in front of which, as well as the Babel of mingled sounds which is already issuing from within, proclaim it to be the

* The Organ Mountains—so called from their shape.

great public market of the capital. Halting at the corner, I take a bird's-eye view of the whole panorama; and am fain to confess to myself that, despite my previous admiration of the Stamboul bazaar at Constantinople, the Arab market in Alexandria, and the "Gostinni Dvor" of St. Petersburg, the tableau now before me may safely bear comparison with either. Fruits such as Covent Garden never dreamed of—pyramids of fresh fish, glittering like silver in the broadening sunshine—live stock in all gradations, from the bristly forest-hog to the rainbow-plumaged toucan—a ceaseless clatter of sticks and baskets, an incessant buzz of chaffering in half the tongues of Europe—human curiosities of every complexion, from the delicate mezzo-tinto of a round of buttered toast to the glossy undiluted blackness of a newly-cleaned boot, and arrayed in every variety of costume, from a frilled shirt to nothing at all—and, in the background, the clear glassy water, and the tall slender palms of the Isle of Cobras, such is the *mis en scène*.

Having taken in the general effect of the great medley, I begin to survey it in detail. To my right lies a broad flat board heaped with the daintiest of native fish; the luscious "camaraõ," or giant prawn, longer and thicker than a man's middle finger; the tasty flat-fish, slipping over each other like packs of cards; the leathern "bacalhãõ" (smoked salt fish), looking very much like a rolled-up copy-book; the square-headed turbot, and the jolly corpulent garoupa, a true alderman of the sea. But among all these, like a privateer amid a convoy of merchantmen, figure formidably the forked tail, the under-hung jaw, the huge dagger-like back-fin, of my old acquaintance the shark. Young shark is a delicacy in this part of the world, and so, apparently, thinks the portly Brazilian housekeeper at my elbow (with a bunch of keys at her girdle which might have suited Bluebeard himself) who is chaffering keenly for the ill-omened fish, which she at length succeeds in obtaining—amid terrible protestations and appeals to the saints on the part of the salesman—at little more than twenty-five per cent above its market value. As her little black henchman marches off with his prize, I bethink myself of the old West Indian story of the negro who, being reproved for breakfasting upon such a notorious feeder on dead bodies as the Jamaica land-crab, answered with a grin, "Ah, massa! land-crab eat black man—nebber mind, black man eat he!"

To my left, again, sprawls a stalwart

negro boatman, with his bare and brawny limbs lazily outstretched in the sunshine, drinking off the smoking coffee which has just been poured out for him by a shrivelled old mulatto woman who is sitting over a file of cracked cups, and a battered metal coffee-pot, at the corner of the piazza. In the black's half-shut eyes, and the intense relish with which he smacks his blubber lips over the thick black decoction, you may read the fulness of enjoyment after labour. He has been up all night, ferrying off passengers to that big steamer yonder behind the island, which will sail for England in another hour; and he is now taking his morning coffee previous to lying down for a good long nap on the warm, smooth pavement of the quay.

Further on, as I penetrate deeper into the chaos, appears a goodly store of native vegetables, whose very names are strange to a European ear; the plump smooth-checked abacato, looking like a pear and tasting like a vanilla ice; the delicious diabo, a cross between artichoke and vegetable marrow, meriting a better name than its Brazilian one, which means, literally, "devil;" the huge knobby yam, wearing a shillelagh-like appearance, which draws a grin of friendly recognition from a passing Irishman; the mamaõ, a kind of expurgated ginger, with all the richness and none of the burning strength; and others besides, too many to name. Mingled with these are numbers of old acquaintances—the furry cocoa-nut, the round-waistcoated melon, the red-coated tomato, the sleek Tangerine orange, the writhing cucumber, and the odorous garlic—a catalogue that might have tasked Homer himself. For these there is a brisk demand; and the whirl of black faces and white jackets, gaping bags and huge tub-like baskets, together with the shrill cackle of bargaining that resounds on every side, are enough to make one's head reel. To the right, two basket-bearers have just come into collision and upset their loads, the vegetables rolling off in every direction with an eager, joyful alacrity, as if rejoicing at their escape, while the injured Sambos shriek and caper amid the ruin like a couple of lunatic sweeps. To the left, an old woman and her stall capsize simultaneously, and the poor creature squeals piteously beneath an avalanche of yams and water-melons, amid roars of laughter from the unsympathetic bystanders. Louder and louder grows the uproar, as fresh arrivals pour in every minute; till, at length, finding myself in

constant peril of being struck deaf and crushed to pieces at one and the same moment, I am fain to beat a retreat to the other side of the market.

But in this case, as in most others of the kind, it is out of the frying-pan into the fire. I have barely changed my place, when I become aware that the din and shouting of the human occupants are suddenly reinforced by a mingled clamour of screaming, chattering, grunting, cackling, and howling, as though all the menageries upon earth had broken loose at once. I have camped in a tropical forest too often not to recognise instantaneously the various components of the music; and the different choristers, when I have time to inspect them, make a very picturesque show. Here is a very woebegone-looking "lion monkey," blending his plaintive little pipe with the deeper howl of his gaunt, black, long-armed neighbour. Overhead, a row of parrots are screeching and chattering, as only Brazilian parrots can screech and chatter; while three or four big, serious-looking grey parrots, in a separate cage hard by, are watching them with an air of grave disapproval, and ever and anon interpolating a deep hoarse scream, as if in protest against the misbehaviour of their congeners. A little further on, a colony of ducks, indignant at seeing the turkeys next door fed before them, are remonstrating with a loudness and fluency worthy of a Hyde Park meeting; while the deep grunts of a patriarchal "porco do mato," or wild pig, whose small, deep-set cunning eye looks sideways at me through a forest of black bristles, form a bass to their clamorous treble. Far away at the end of the line, a group of magnificent toucans, in all the splendour of their gorgeous plumage, sit in stern silence, like the doomed senators of Rome amid the army of Brennus—awaiting death with a firmness worthy of a better cause. For in this land of strange dishes, where monkey-soup replaces julienne, and where parrots are made into pies instead of pets, neither fur nor feathers can long remain unscathed.

If there are fewer purchasers on this side of the market, there are more spectators; and the blending of all nationalities is in itself a sufficiently curious sight. Lean, voluble Frenchmen, sallow Spaniards, and lithe, black-haired Portuguese; gaunt, high-cheeked, keen-eyed Yankees; brawny English sailors, looking around them with that air of grand, indulgent contempt characteristic of the true Briton when

among those unfortunates whom an inscrutable Providence has condemned to be foreigners; and, every here and there, a sturdy, fresh-coloured, helpful looking man with the light hair and clear blue eye of the Fatherland—one of those firm, patient, indomitable fellows who are silently transforming the interior of Brazil,* and annexing large tracts of uncleared forest, with the same vigour and dexterity wherewith their great leader removed his neighbour's landmark two years ago.

As the morning wears on, other habitués begin to appear; sallow, nerveless men in white tunics, looking very much like cigars wrapped in paper—pudding-faced boys, struck with temporary paralysis by the tightness of their unmentionables—fat officers, whose projecting swords are suggestive of a skewer run through an over-boiled turkey—fashionable belles blossoming into the extreme plainness of youth, and portly matrons rife with all the mature ugliness of middle age. In moving aside to let the throng pass, I come suddenly upon a knot of mulatto costermongers with their baskets beside them, breakfasting in common from a huge bowl of black beans, the cost of the meal being chalked upon a little slate which hangs above the board. The sight naturally reminds me of my own breakfast, and, referring to my watch, I am amazed to find that it is already past nine o'clock, and not at all amazed to find that I am getting very hungry.

"Pick me out something good, for I've got a horse's appetite this morning," remark I, half an hour later, to the smart little Londoner whom I have chosen from the hotel staff as my especial attendant.

"Well, then, sir," responds the expatriated Sam Weller, seizing this tempting chance of a bon-mot, "ain't my givin' you this 'ere bill o' fare somethin' like puttin' the carte afore the 'orse?"

NOTES OR GOLD?

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "FATAL ZERO," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXI. MR. NAGLE AT THE ORGAN.

ON the morning after Mr. Doughty's grand concert, and the rather important changes that had been crowded into the space of a night, Mr. Nagle rose up with the importance of a commander-in-chief. Weighty responsibilities were now falling

* In Juiz da Fora alone, there are no fewer than fourteen thousand German colonists; and Petropolis (the Balmoral of Brazil) is literally peopled with them.

on his shoulders. Music was actually with him sinking into quite a secondary matter; and if his services as a teacher were in tolerable request, he fumed at the recurring lessons as so many interruptions. He exclaimed impatiently in the spirit, though not in the words of Lofty, "I'll be pack-horse to none of 'em." He entered the houses of his pupils like some overworked secretary of state, and, it must be said, consumed a good portion of the time that should have been devoted to tuition in easy conversation on unmusical matters. Braham's scholar began, as some considered it, to give himself airs. He positively declared he could not go through the drudgery of dealing with raw, untrained organs, and such he forthwith bade go to Dobson, or Jones, or "some local stonebreaker," as he styled the inferior order of his profession. "I assure you," he would say, good-naturedly, "Dobson is a very good, honest, hard-working fellow, with a wife and six children"—as though they formed part of his musical gifts—"and you couldn't do better than go to him. He'll put you through the dumb-bells, and the rest of it—work the Doremifasol, and all that. When you've got the muscles well greased, and in working order, come to me. I could not do you a halfpenny-worth of good now—not a halfpenny-worth. No, go to a Dobson for a twelvemonth."

"Stonebreaker" was not at all an unsuitable description of professional gentlemen like Dobson and his brethren, who abound in every town, and who, honest souls! are the very hodmen of music. They thump at their pianos with a resolution worthy of those who are breaking stones on the roadside; bring out the human voice, and teach singing, much as a drill-sergeant will slave at the arms and legs of his recruits. There were some humble hodmen in Brickford who regarded the flashy gifts of Mr. Nagle almost with obsequiousness, though he had snatched away some of the few crusts that found their way to their hungry jaws. But they hoped to be repaid by some such recommendations as we have described. Dobson, indeed, had won the favour of his patron by his remarkable self-abnegation and humility, and was spoken of in Nagle circles as "a very worthy, hard-working creature, to whom it was a charity to give a job. No one could be better as a puddler"—a metaphor, it may be presumed, drawn from one of the most laborious operations of the iron trade.

These were exciting days for Mr. Nagle,

and though there was some uncertainty in the future, he felt that he and his family were among the most important people in Brickford. He talked of quitting the "stuffy den" in the Crescent, and of taking a handsome house in a more fashionable quarter. The little memorandum-book was really filling up with entries, and the Harmonic Matinees were being established. A little circular on tinted note-paper had already gone forth, announcing that these meetings would shortly commence, and by "the obliging permission of J. Doughty, Esq.," would be held in the "noble music room" of that gentleman. Always soaring and ambitious in his views, Mr. Nagle had conceived the idea of a "Grand Conservatory of Music" as he called it, where all sorts of arts should be cultivated; where there should be classes for vocal, for instrumental music, for counterpoint, for foreign languages, for organ-playing even. His dream was that these branches were not so much to be taught by ordinary masters, as to be acquired, by a sort of inspiration, by personal contact with himself and family. It was the true tone that he wished to impart. The price of this hazy "course," including singing, playing, dancing, and, we may presume, the musical glasses, if the parents required it, and for the foreign languages, organ-playing, &c., was certainly reasonable—some five "geeneys" a year. Then "associates" could be affiliated for the modest sum of "a geeney" per annum, for which they were admitted to all the concerts, all the rehearsals, to the Harmonic Matinees, to the Soirées Musicales, to the tuneful *Après-midis*, and to the occasional dances—certainly a generous and handsome "geeney's" worth. It was a prodigious scheme this of Mr. Nagle's, though cloudy enough; but it sounded so magnificent that the subscriptions began to flow in. It must be said, however, that the public were good-natured and indulgent, and expected nothing very practical from him. They were content with the airy programme which he set before them, and there was beside that little weakness, found in too many communities, of looking tenderly on the family which by an auspicious marriage might be raised, as it were, from the ranks. Mr. Nagle told his confidential friends that the coming change would make no difference in his life—in the profession he had lived, in the profession would he die. He felt that it ennobled him; at his time of life, "he was not going to become ashamed of it." The old

Broadwood he would never give up. "It has stuck to me through thick and thin, come weal come woe," Mr. Nagle would say, as though he were performing the marriage service, "in sickness and in health, and I am not going to discard it now in my prosperity."

There was much excitement when it became known that the old organist had been expelled, and some plain unmusical people, who had not been fascinated by the glittering manner of Braham's pupil, or of Braham's pupil's bewitching daughter, spoke of the matter as an oppressive act. In a place like Brickford, every ordinary personage or functionary has his party of friends; and the case of this old retainer, who, indeed, had done his work respectably, justly excited a good deal of sympathy.

When, therefore, on the following Sunday, it was known that Braham Nagle would preside at the organ, there was some excitement, and a more than usually large congregation attended.

It is amazing what self-confidence will do. It was a truth that the professor knew no more of that noble instrument than he did of the ophicleide, or of the double bass, yet on the general assumption that "he had sat at the feet of the immortal Braham," he felt that if any difficulty were to be noticed it might be attributed to the instrument, or, indeed, even to the ignorance of the congregation. He had, it is true, "presided at the harmonium," in a small country chapel, and the gifts which he had brought to that function he considered more than sufficient for any "hodmen" who came to church at a place like Brickford. The stops and pedals were matters utterly unfamiliar. Yet he boldly took his seat, and when the occasion arrived, gave out a strange, discordant jumble, with a vast number of wrong notes, which he tried to overpower in what he called "a general rumble up;" and such was the plastic art of the performer, that he contrived to make a sort of doubtful impression on the congregation, and to avoid leaving one of a complete break down, so deafening and confused was the noise or "rumble up" that he succeeded in producing. With a marvellous self-confidence, he even attempted the use of the pedals, plunging his heel down on the lowest ones, which produced a sort of muffled thunder, and distracted attention from the fact of its being the wrong note. When, however, "he got a chance," as he called it, he began to flourish away in flowing and

pathetic voluntaries, indulging in mundane and operative runs, and melodies. Finally, he played the audience out in a tremendous hurly-burly of wrong chords, wrong notes—"misfires," as he used to call them in tuition—a sort of slap-dash-helter-skelter, which he entitled a march "Religioso," but which might have been anything in the wide world, save what was musical. The result was a sense of bewilderment and doubt, though people certainly felt that there was a difference between this and poor old Humphries's style. Will Gardiner was the first dissenter.

"Why, chaos come again is nothing to him! Nagle must have chartered all the cats and dogs in the parish, and let them loose over his keys. I suppose it's the way Braham would have played if he had been able to finger the thing. But I am only what he calls a 'hodman' at music, so I suppose I am no judge."

The friends of the ejected Humphries thought it seemed "all abroad," but they were overborne by the delighted criticisms of the young lady pupils, and the applause of members of the Harmonic Matinées, who were, in a manner, committed to approbation. And thus it was that Mr. Nagle came to play the organ at the Brickford church with a most imperfect knowledge, and was pronounced to be a performer in the grand style.

CHAPTER XXII. DOCTOR SPOONER.

ALL this season was a time of suspense, as it were, and also a time of acting. Mr. Doughty, grown thinner and colder, looked out wearily and eagerly, waiting for something to be determined. The proud Corinna had her own purpose fixed, whatever that might be, but she too was tantalised by the suspense, the attendant mortification, the prying and the jealous looks, and the longing anticipations of her defeat. As for Mr. Duke, he had become morbid and even sulky, and was worried by finding himself in a position where he knew that he was expected to decide on some course, and that all the vulgar tattlemongers of the place were watching him. He was in truth a highly selfish and ornamental young officer, whose grand aim in life was to avoid being "annoyed" or "worried;" who was very well content to bestow his affections on the enchanting Corinna, provided matters went very much as they would on some long night at a ball, where all was music and dancing, bright and flashing light, beauty, youth, and

entertaining talk. It was like awakening from a pleasant dream. He found himself suddenly brought face to face with business; he saw that he was expected "to do something," to take some practical step from which he recoiled. Everything, too, seemed to have assumed new and prosy shapes. The divinity of the enchanting Corinna had invested Brickford with golden clouds; now it seemed a depressing, murky, gloomy, manufacturing place, as indeed it was. Mr. Nagle, through the same medium, had taken the shape of some spiritualised Mozart or Mendelssohn. He was the father of an enchanting heroine, and dealt with divine harmonies, and exquisite melodies—quite, in short, a dreamy artist. Now he became of a sudden a common music-master, whose vulgarity and cheap and paltry manner quite jarred upon the fastidious Alfred. That Doughty, whom he had taken such a pride in defeating, he looked on now with a jealousy of quite another kind, as one who had shown a superior tact and knowledge of the world.

And the enchanting Corinna herself, how was she regarded by the fickle swain whom she had enslaved? Had this general *désillusionnement* affected her? No one could have guessed from her manner or bearing that she noted any change in her admirer. Her own family could only see that she had the same calm, impassive, impenetrable air, behind which there was no piercing; that she seemed to be calmly awaiting the issue, whatever that might be, or whenever it was to come. That was now not very far off.

It had come to a certain Monday morning, when Mr. Nagle, paying his accustomed visit to his opulent friend, found him a little unwell. A bad cold—had not slept very well during the night. Instantly the visitor was in a state of bustle and agitation. "We must have in a medical man. My dear friend, you must not neglect yourself. Would you like Parker, or perhaps Spooner—I think on the whole, Spooner." Mr. Doughty was indifferent. He had thought of sending for some one. One physician seemed to him as good as another. So he left it to his friend.

Away spurred Mr. Nagle, always in his element when on some mission of this kind. He has a large number of brethren and sisters in the world, who in any situation of the kind arrive booted and spurred, as it were, and delight in hurrying away express to fetch this person and that. For such persons a sudden illness is quite a godsend.

Mr. Nagle having selected Doctor Spooner, made straight for that gentleman's house. Spooner was a new doctor who had come to open up the "practice" of the district, just as Mr. Nagle had done with the musical ground. He was a young man, good-looking, with glossy black whiskers, who possessed that valuable professional gift which the College of Physicians cannot impart, and which patients, strange to say, are often content to accept instead of knowledge, namely, a good manner. He would appear so absorbed and interested in the story of a patient's symptoms, that it seemed, as one of his friends or enemies remarked, as if he were listening to the reading of a will when he expected to find himself a legatee. So much surprise, enjoyment, and interest were exhibited that the patient was flattered, and conceived the idea either that he had such powers of narrative as to invest a dry subject with the charms of romance, or that his case had some special features of interest which distinguished it from others. The new physician, too, had a low voice; was deferential, though firm; insinuating; dressed well, and thus contrasted most favourably with the old-established doctors of the place, who affected the gruff Abernethy manner, and were too far advanced in life and in the profession to change.

It was natural that this gentleman and Mr. Nagle should be drawn together, their principles being the same; and Mr. Spooner, besides, affected a certain deference, and even admiration, for the music-master, as being one who had seen a vast deal of the world. He conveyed the sense of this admiration so cleverly, that Mr. Nagle assumed the airs of a patron, and spoke everywhere of his friend as a "worthy, deserving, clever fellow;" and often used the phrase, when a pupil was suffering from hoarseness or a cold in the head, "you should see Spooner." To Mr. Doughty he used the same hortation, "You should see Spooner at once," and hurried off to bring back the physician himself.

It was a curious circumstance, however, that, only a few yards from Doctor Spooner's house, Mr. Nagle should have reined up the imaginary charger on which he was mounted, and have become gravely reflective. It occurred to him that he was introducing into the sacred preserve, which he had guarded so jealously, another candidate sportsman, and an idea of danger suggested itself from so agreeable and entertaining a physician. Was it not rather

Quixotic, tempting Providence, as it were, thus introducing one who might hereafter hoist him, Nagle, on his own private petard ? This thought struck him with a sudden panic, and it was possible that he might have turned back, and acted as "bringer" to one of the more old-fashioned, but safer, mediocrities, when Mr. Spooner himself suddenly came up, and was so obsequious and deferential, that Mr. Nagle muttered an internal "Pooh ! pooh !" addressed to himself, and instantly imparted his intelligence. Then he carried the doctor off at once to his opulent friend's house, where the usual formalities, tactual, visual, and scriptural : that is, of pulse feeling, respectful tongue examination, and prescription writing : were gone through. Mr. Doughty tolerated these functions with more than his usual indifference, and Mr. Nagle again said, "Pooh ! pooh !" to himself in contemptuous rebuke. After the doctor's departure, the patient detained his friend Nagle for a little chat.

"I can hardly speak," he said, "with this cold. But tell me how are they all at home."

"Corinna will be dreadfully distressed when I tell her of this—quite grieved about you."

"Nonsense, my dear sir ; she has something more engrossing to think of than a middle-aged gentleman's cold."

"Middle-aged," exclaimed Mr. Nagle, with a horror, as though some one had stated in his presence that his opulent friend was a malefactor, had forged bonds, &c. "Why, boyish, boyish, my dear sir, would be more the word ; boyish in mind, and body."

"Thank you for the compliment, which is well meant, though boyishness and middle age make a comic mixture. Well, everything is going well in the innamorato direction ?"

Mr. Nagle scratched his chin uneasily.

"Pon my word I don't know what to say. There is a haziness about the young man, and Corinna is so dignified, that really, though she is my own child, I don't like to ask her about the business. It's unsatisfactory somehow, and I'd really like——"

"To see something satisfactory. Well we must only wish her plenty of valentines—to-day is Saint Valentine's Day, you know. Have the young men of Brickford been pouring in verses and odes ? No ?"

"My dear friend, there it is. Girls are such utter fools with their fiddle-de-dee. I know the man that I believe her heart to

be set upon. There's some unlucky malintendew somewhere, and things won't go straight."

"You must only try and straighten them," said Mr. Doughty, indifferently. "Good-bye."

CHAPTER XXIII. THE LAMPOON.

As Mr. Doughty had said, this was the month of February, and that particular day in the month of February which some millions of rational beings dedicate to overloading the Post Office with strangely-painted cut-out cards and worse doggerel. This, perhaps the most idiotic of all British customs, was not neglected in Brickford, and in the morning before Mr. Nagle had paid his visit to his friend, the postman had left quite a packet of effusions of this kind. When Mr. Nagle returned he found his daughter cold and haughty, her eyes gloomy with a stern determination and indignation. Mr. Nagle was in high good humour. "What," he said, "not enough valentines, Corry, dear ?"

"It is too much," she said, with infinite scorn. "I cannot endure it any longer. Has it come to this now, that any creature of the place can make free with our name ?"

"In the name of all the discords—what do ye mean, Corry ?"

"I mean that the end of all this plotting and finessing is that we have lost in respect, that my name is a by-word. I cannot endure it longer. It is cruel and unfair. Raise yourself in the world, father, any way you can, but do not use your daughter to help you. But it serves us right."

"I don't know what you are talking about," said Mr. Nagle, impatiently. "I am worried to death among you all. I tell you I do everything for the best——"

"Is that for the best," said Corinna, in her stateliest manner, throwing down a paper upon the table. "It is degrading ! I feel like some miserable adventuress ; but as I said, it only serves us right."

Mr. Nagle took up the paper. It was a copy of verses, and he read as follows :

Oh, charming Miss Nagle,
Are things quite en règle,
Is money or love to be winner ?
There's age, which is cold,
And youth without gold,
At the feet of the lovely Corinna.

There's D—ghty and D—ke,
To which do you look ?
One handsome, the other much thinner,
To fall 'twixt two stools
Is the fate of some fools,
So keep this in mind, fair Corinna.

Young D—ke will be doughty,
 Duke D—ghty will flout ye,
 As surely as I am a sinner,
 That lordly young D—ke
 You never will hook,
 Do your best, enchanting Corinna!

Mr. Nagle perused this doggrel to the end. "Uncommonly free and impertinent," he said.

"They are welcome," answered Corinna, "for we have deserved it. We have invited it. And you, you papa, are the cause of this degradation for your child. What can we expect when we attempt to go out of our station?"

"It is very fine laying it on me," said Mr. Nagle. "You were making up to this young spark, who has no more honourable intentions about him than I have. If you hadn't offended Mr. Doughty——"

"Ah! that was it," said Corinna, suddenly snatching the paper; "a most noble revenge truly—to stab at a poor girl in the dark. I could not have believed it of him. I thought he would be generous, at least, if he could not understand me."

"Who, Doughty? ridiculous! He write lampoons, nothing of the kind; though, indeed, 'pon my word, he did ask me this morning had you received any verses."

"I was sure of it," said Corinna. "None of the poor hinds in this place have sense enough to put such rhymes together."

"Still, he wouldn't describe himself in that way; as 'Old Doughty,' and all that——"

"That's exactly what he would do," said Corinna. "But all I ask is this, and I implore it of you. Do not let me be dragged through the mire in this way—he offered to the best bidder to be rejected contemptuously any more. I cannot bear it. It must not be. If you love your daughter, respect her, or wish her to be respected, you will leave me out of these wretched, restless plans. It is contemptible, unworthy, to be using your child as a stepping-stone."

"Oh, fiddle-de-dee!" said Mr. Nagle. "I can't have this nonsense! I want no stepping-stones, as you call 'em. My name and reputation are pretty well established. I have fought my own way, ma'am. Ask any one who Braham Nagle is. I am not quite so foolish as you would make me out. The whole failure is owing to your own

fault. We might have had Old Doughty at this moment, I firmly believe, only for your high-flown romance."

"Yes," said Corinna, "and at this moment he would have despised me, and have been persuaded that we wanted him only for his money. I could not have endured that."

"More fool you; and what are you to endure now? To be laughed at by all the envious young women of the place."

"But it all must end, father. I withdraw. We must give up all these plans, which, indeed, I have only tolerated for your sake. I wish now to work for my bread, to confine myself to our own proper station."

Had the immortal Braham risen through a trap-door suddenly and stood beside him, Mr. Nagle could not have been more astonished. "Why this is all moonshine and——and——" the word would not come, so he had to use his favourite one—"all fiddle-dee."

"I wish," said Corinna, not heeding this familiar phrase, "to accept the proposal which I declined before, and go and be a public singer on the stage. I did not like it at first, but now I see I must do it."

"Well, of all the things in the world I ever heard!" was the only exclamation Mr. Nagle could find, as he saw in her face that calm, but not hostile look of determination which had so often before checked his angriest expostulations.

As she quitted the room, his eyes fell on the obnoxious "lampoon," as he called it to himself. This outrage had really made him uncomfortable; it was low and mean; an undignified proceeding, a "gross liberty" in short. As for its coming from Doughty, that was a mere girl's delusion; it was more like Mrs. Will Gardiner, or the ejected Humphries. Most probably, though, "that woman"—he was always as it were denouncing an offender with a "that," like a finger of scorn. There was a hard hostility about the lady he never could relish; a cold indifference even to his conjuring with the mighty name of Braham. Much wondering at these changes, Mr. Nagle put on his hat with some depression of spirit, and went away to preside at one of the meetings of what he called a "Mat.," that is, one of the Harmonic Matinées.